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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to test the revisionist theory which holds that students are channeled into good or poor reading groups, depending on the socioeconomic status of their parents as perceived by the teacher. The theory also maintains that there is a detrimental lack of mobility between groups within a given class and from grade to grade. The sample for the study involved primary school students and teachers, while a follow-up study one year later involved the same students and their new teachers. In the first year, teachers provided information pertaining to the reading ability of 2,362 students, and the teachers' perceptions of each child's background. A questionnaire was sent to each child's home requesting information on parents' occupations, education, and income. The next year, the new teachers provided information on each student's new reading status. The results indicated that reading ability and general ability were significant factors in reading group placement, but home background and physical attractiveness were irrelevant. The amount of time teachers spent with good and poor groups was about the same. The results also indicated that while there was little mobility between groups in a given year, there was significant mobility from one year to the next. Overall, the study did not support the revisionist theory. (HTH)

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Grouping for Reading in the Primary Grades:
Evidence on the Revisionist Argument.

Chris Moacdieh

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Cornell University

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Abstract.

In this paper, allegations regarding the effect of status on reading group placement, differential treatment to the groups, and mobility between groups were tested. Little evidence was found to substantiate these accusations.

As part of our liberal tradition, we seem to accept the existence of inequality as long as a person's economic and social positions have been fairly and freely got; and as long as there is always the opportunity to improve socially and economically. We also deem it fair that competition exists, though we would like to equalize the "initial run for the spoils". In other words, many of us would believe that equal opportunity should be available to every person, in order to make competition just and fair. So, even if genetic or environmental differences exist, given equal opportunity, there should be no direct causal relationship between the social status of a person and the lifetime attainment of the person (Guthrie, et. al., 1971). Unfortunately, this is not often the case. Time and again, it has proved that parental status predicts the eventual attainment of their offspring, and studies have denoted that parental status sometimes causes social attainment. One of the mechanisms that have been proposed as a cause for this form of injustice has been the school. Recent literature has focused on many school-related issues pertaining to areas such as the "hidden curriculum", the problem of bias in testing, and racial or sexual discrimination in schools, as well as to the area of grouping or tracking—this last being the concern of this paper.

Tracking or "homogeneous grouping" is the school process of allocating students to groups. Rosenbaum (1976) defines it as "any school selection system that attempts to homogenize classroom placements in term of students personal qualities, performances or aspirations" (p. 6). Tracking could be considered as a term encompassing two processes, one that goes on in grade school and another that is typical of the high school. In the elementary classes, this procedure is usually denoted by "ability grouping". In this case, grouping is used mainly to cope with students' learning needs (Rosenbaum, 1980). In high schools, tracking is usually termed "curriculum grouping".

Tracking is a very wide spread phenomenon. The Harvard Center for Law and Education reports that ninety per cent of all high school students attend schools that track, while most of the other students attend specialized schools where the whole school is a single track (1972). Since tracking is so widespread in use, justifications for its use ought to abound. The major ones include the claims that grouping attempts to "reduce the range of individual differences, to provide enriched educational experiences for gifted pupils, to facilitate the use of special personnel or resources, to enable remedial or compensatory help to be given to those who require it; to organize differential programs or courses to cater for a variety of education and vocational needs" (Yates, 1966). Unfortunately, these tenets are not always what they promise to be, and consequently, the process of grouping has been vociferously attacked.

One group of recent researchers which has been opposed to the practice of tracking, is a group that has been sometimes called (Ravitch, 1978; Rehberg and Rosenthal, 1978) the "revisionists". The terms itself is rather nebulous, but as Ravitch (1978) has indicated, the revisionist writers are radical critics who, in reevaluating history, reassessed liberalism and repudiated it. Authors who would fall in this category would include such radical or Marxist authors as Bowles and Gintis (1978), Sexton (1961), Katz (1971), Greer (1972), and others. In this paper, a broader understanding of the term "revisionist" is espoused, including liberal reformers such as Rist (1970) or Schafer and Olexa (1971). The general characteristics of a revisionist are then those of a critic of education---radical or more conservative--- who reasses the current liberalistic traditions in education, and upholds the paradigm that "the predominant influence on an individual's progress in school is the social class of his or her family" (Rehberg and Rosenthal, 1978: 1). As examples, Rist (1970) argued that the teacher possesses an image of an "ideal student" that he/she resorts to when making grouping decisions. Thus, decisions are biased

by that ideal image, which conforms to a middle class, attractive-looking, well-behaved student. As for Bowles and Gintis (1978), they lay the blame on the school as the legitimator of class differences and the propagator of the injustice brought about by the prevailing economic order. Tracking, they claim, is the means whereby schools channel students into different work roles; the lower groups filling the undesirable jobs of the community. Schafer and Olexa (1971), have tested several claims related to tracking and have arrived at conclusions similar to those of the revisionists: tracking is comparable to the caste system, they claim. In brief, grouping is based on class rather than merit, and "if you know a child's class status...you can quite accurately predict what will happen to him in school and how successful he will be" (Sexton, 1961).

On the other hand, many a study did not find evidence for the bias indicated by the revisionists. In the works of Heyns (1974), Rehberg and Rosenthal (1978), Alexander and McDill (1976), Alexander, Cook and McDill (1978) (sometimes called the "meritocrats" as in Rehberg and Rosenthal (1978)), allocation to ability groups was found to be based on individual merit, rather than parental status. For instance, Heyns (1974) perceived that ability contributed more influence on placement than socioeconomic status. Alexander, Cook and McDill (1978) presented a model, using varied demographic and status-related variables. Ability, achievement and curricular plans were found to be the best predictors of placement. All direct effects of socioeconomic status and race were negligible. Almost two thirds of the influence of such variables were accounted for by academic ability and achievement, educational goals and curricular plans, and support given by parents and peers.

Several salient issues presented in current related literature deserve elaboration and testing. Also, it can be noted, that many of the studies done are related to high school tracking. Very few studies have been done in

elementary ability groups. This paper, then, aims to investigate elementary grouping and to examine some related important issues.

The revisionists claim that allocation to groups is biased by the students' parental socioeconomic status. Schafer and Olaxa (1971) noted that "teachers...may well have been influenced about students' backgrounds, based on style of dress, interpersonal demeanor, place of residence, or knowledge of the school performance of older brothers and sisters" (p. 35). Similarly, Rist (1970) discusses a mental "ideal type" that teachers compare students to, prior to placing students in groups. Rist also talks about the physical appearance of children: their dress, their looks, their hygiene, and even their smell. All of these, he claims, influence teacher decisions. Several studies have found concurring results (Adams, 1978; Harvey and Slatin, 1975) while others have not (Jose and Cody, 1971; Adams and LaVoie, 1974).

Other factors that teachers might take into consideration while grouping are "disruptiveness" and the classroom behavior of students (Glass, 1967; Albro and Haller, 1972). Brophy and Good (1974) point out that speech characteristics also influence teacher perceptions of the students. The language used by the students, Rist (1970) elaborates, should conform to standard middle class English; failing to do so would contribute to a negative assessment by the teachers. Brophy and Good (1974) list several attributes that have been found to influence teachers' perceptions and evaluations. These include the students' social class, race and sex; as well as student achievement, personality, physical attractiveness and speech characteristics. Comparable results were reached in a study by Albro and Haller (1972). They were able to isolate six factors measuring teachers' perceptions of their students, shown to be implicated in grouping decisions. These criteria are: general ability of the students, reading ability, classroom behavior, the home background of the students, classroom and scholastic work habits, and physical

attractiveness. These six criteria will be taken into consideration in this paper, addressing the first question in the study: What criteria are used by teachers in assigning primary grade children to their reading ability groups?

The second question is related to the relation of these criteria to the students' socioeconomic status. The revisionists claim that group placement is status related and that status determines attainment. Rist claims that the teachers use the criteria enumerated above, and furthermore, the "ideal type" conforms to a "well-educated middle class person" (p.422). This relation of the placement criteria to a student's parental SES will be tested. Moreover, if the revisionist argument holds, it is expected that the SES-criteria relationship be stronger than the SES-criteria association. Thus, the second question: what is the relation of these criteria to the students socioeconomic background?

The revisionists claim that schools have treated children as "units to be processed into particular shapes and dropped into slots roughly congruent with the status of their parents" (Katz, 1971: xviii). This seems to be more true in earlier grades than in higher grades, as Goodwin and Sanders have found (in Brophy and Good, 1974). One explanation that some revisionists might give is that early grade grouping is done on SES and SES-related criteria, after which differential treatment (Sexton, 1967; Schafer and Olexa, 1971; Rist, 1970) and different expectations (Bowles, in Rehberg and Rosenthal, 1978) are accorded to the groups. Under such treatment, real differences in achievement begin to emerge. Thus, if first grade groups are based more or less on factors related to status, ability is expected to be rather randomly dispersed among the groups. In successively higher grades, however, real differences in ability would emerge. Thus, if this argument is to hold true, we would expect that the relationship between track and achievement increases as we go up successively higher grades. Haller and Davis (1981a) mention something that is not too

dissimilar when testing the notion that if the revisionist theory holds, then in the higher elementary grades the difference in achievement between the top and bottom groups should be greater than that in lower grades. No such evidence was found. As far as I know, other than this study there are practically no studies that investigate the claim discussed above. The question to be tested here is, then: does achievement predict group placement better in higher primary grades than in lower ones?

The fourth question deals with differential time allocation given by the teachers to their groups. The revisionists allege that low-ability pupils have less opportunities to respond, they receive fewer positive teacher contacts and they are given less instructional time (Schafer and Olexa, 1971; Sexton, 1961; Bowles and Gintis, 1978; Rist, 1970). In this paper, instructional time will be examined, which in this context is to be defined as the time that the teacher actually spends with a group in order to bring about learning. Thus tasks and classroom assignments are not included in this notion of "teacher time". Non-discriminatory allocation of time could be interpreted as equal allocation to all groups, or as allocation with respect to need. If the latter meaning is to be taken, the teacher could be spending more time with the slow learners, and this is not to be considered as discrimination. The fourth question, then, is: do teachers spend less instructional time with the lower ability groups than with the higher?

The fifth and last concern of this paper involves mobility between groups. The literature available seems to have found little evidence for any mobility whether in high school tracking or in grade school grouping (Schafer and Olexa, 1971; Wilder and Blumner, 1972; Weinstein, 1976; Barker Lunn, 1970) Rosenbaum, (1976), for instance, found no upward mobility in high school tracks, and a very moderate number (29%) of students moving down. In primary classes, Rist alleges that "no matter how well a child in the lower reading

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groups might have read, he was destined to remain in the same reading group. That is, in a sense, another manifestation of the self fulfilling prophecy in that a "slow-learner" had no option but to continue to be a slow learner, regardless of performance or potential" (1970: 435). The question, then, is: is group membership fixed, or are students shifted between groups during the year and when students change grades?

Finally, the five questions that are addressed in this paper are, again:

1. What criteria are used by teachers in assigning primary grade children to their reading groups?
2. What is the relation of these criteria to the students' socioeconomic status?
3. Does achievement predict group placement better in higher primary grades than in lower ones?
4. Do teachers spend less instructional time with the lower ability groups than with the higher?
5. Is group membership fixed, or are students shifted between groups during the year and when students change grades?

This study is based on my forthcoming doctoral dissertation, and is part of a series of studies instigated by Emil Haller at Cornell University. These pieces of research all deal with the role of classroom stratification in producing inequality. Throughout, the aim had been to deal with earlier grades: junior high grades, and more recently, primary school.

The importance of the study lies in the importance of the questions tested. These questions are central to the revisionist interpretation of the role of grouping and tracking in schools. Thus, our results should throw additional light on that interpretation. This study will also be helpful to teachers and administrators, by shedding light on some classroom practices that teachers might not be aware of. As for limitations, several pertain to the

sample under study. For instance, not enough Black students have been found in the sample to warrant the study of race; and the sex of the students has not been taken into consideration. A more prominent limitation is that a sample such as ours, though covering communities that range from rural to urban-suburban, cannot be generalized to all situations. Though there is no reason to believe that our sample is atypical, it still cannot be archetypical of milieus where extreme wealth and poverty exist.

Method.

Very few of the studies done in this field have focused on the earlier elementary grades. Rather, the tendency has been to deal with the area of high-school tracking. There is enough reason to believe that this emphasis has been misplaced: the ubiquitous relationship between status and placement exists from the very early grades; and it is in such grades, the revisionists claim, that real differences in achievement begin to emerge, based on differences in status.

Therefore, our target has been the earlier grades. The sample involves the first, second and third grades. In the follow up, done one year later, the grades dealt with were the second, third and fourth grades. Data for the study comes from 109 classrooms from 23 randomly chosed grade schools in 11 school districts in the southern tier region of New York. The communities involved range from urban-suburban to rural. The people in the study included the students, their classroom teachers and the students' parents. In all, 109 teachers and 2362 students were involved. In the follow-up, the new sample was matched with the older one so that only the same students in the first wave who were found in the next higher grade a year later were considered. Since some participating schools did not participate the following year, the number of

students common to both waves was almost 800.

In the spring of 1979, the teachers provided information about the reading group placement of each child in their classes, and a ranking of each child according to perceived reading ability. They also responded to a set of 34 items designed to provide scales pertaining to the teachers' perceptions of each child on the six pupil attributes shown to be implicated in grouping decisions and mentioned above. Some of the items include, "turns in work late", "educationally supportive home", "creative", "poor reading skills", "physically or verbally aggressive", "neat appearance", "poor reading vocabulary", and "needs frequent direction". On each of these items, a "3" indicates that the item is highly characteristic of the student, and a "1" shows that it is least characteristic. The teachers also provided reading achievement test scores. Concurrently, a questionnaire was sent to the parents or guardians of the children in the study, providing us with information regarding the fathers's occupation and education, the mother's occupation and education, total family income and a composite measure, Duncan's Socioeconomic Index (Reiss, 1961).

In the late spring of 1980, one year later, these same children were followed up and their new teachers provided three types of information: the students' current reading group placement, a record of the children's group assignment over the course of the year, and a daily log of the amount of time spent with each group during the course of one week.

Copies of the instruments used, as well as discussions on their reliability and validity, can be consulted by referring to my dissertation (Cornell University, 1981).

The variables involved and method of measurement are as follows: as SES measure was computed out of the responses of the parents, by using an unweighted summation of the standardized fathers' education, fathers'

occupational index (Reiss, 1961), mothers' education and family income. "Reading Group Placement" is a trichotomous variable conforming to the top, middle, and low groups combined. A similar measure (Reading Group II) was computed in the follow up. "Rank" and "Rank II" are the ranks of students within their reading groups in 1979 and 1980, respectively. "Time" is The variable involving the time spent with each reading group per day, as reported by the teacher. "Achievement" is measured by the scores on standard reading tests. Finally, the six scales involving teacher perceptions are as follows: (1) "General Achievement": the child's perceived success in academic tests and activities, except those pertaining to reading. (2) "Reading Achievement": this scale is similar to the preceding one except that it pertains only to reading. (3) "Work Habits": these are perceptions pertaining to classroom regularities and scholastic tasks. (4) "Behavior": perceptions regarding student behavior, mannerisms and personal traits. (5) "Family Background": perceptions concerning information about the social aspect of the child's background, with an emphasis on whether the student's home is conducive to learning or not. (6) "Physical Attractiveness": teachers' perceptions of the physical traits of the students. These six scales were computed out of an unweighted summation, that was then standardized. Factor analysis was initially used to test the validity of the individual items.

Statistical procedures are as follows: for the first question, involving the effects of teacher perceptions of reading group placement, step-wise multiple regression will be used. Since "placement" is a trichotomous variable, two separate equations will be used. In each case, one of two groups (high-middle, then middle-low) will be taken. The dichotomous dependent variable will be coded 0 and 1 (Kerlinger and Pedhazur, 1973) and regressed on the six teacher perceptions.

The second question, concerning the relation of these perceptions to

socioeconomic status, will be tested by using zero-order correlations. The third question concerns the effect of achievement on group placement in successive three grades. Three separate analyses will be done, conforming to the three grades. In each case, the dependent variable, "group placement", will be dichotomized in a way similar to the one employed for the first question. The independent variables to be used are "SES" and "achievement". Then, the beta weights will have to be compared across grades. The beta weights will be taken pairwise, and the following test used (Kleinbaum and Kupper, 1978):

$$Z = (B(2) - B(1)) / \text{SQ}((S.E.(2))^2 + (S.E.(1))^2)$$

where B(1) and B(2) are the regression weights of two variables compared across equations; and S.E.(1) and S.E.(2) are the standard errors.

The fourth question, involving differential time treatments, will be tested using one way analysis of variance. The factor in consideration is the group level; and the dependent variable is the "time" spent with each group. The hypothesis is that the time spent in each of the reading groups is equal. This will be tested for significance at the .05 level. As for the last question, this will be resolved by crosstabulating the reading group positions of students in one year, versus the group positions in the following year. As for mobility within the year, frequencies will be presented regarding that.

Results.

For the first question, the sample was divided into two sections, conforming to upper-middle reading groups, and middle-low groups. In each case, the dichotomous variable, reading group placement, was regressed on the six scales describing teacher perceptions that are implicated in grouping decisions. If the revisionist allegations hold true, we would expect "home

background" to have a positive and significant regression coefficient. "Reading ability" and "general ability" should have little predictive power. Table I, presented at the end of the paper, provides a summary of the last step in the stepwise multiple regression.

As is evident in this table, only the scales pertaining to "reading ability" and "general ability" are significant at the .05 level, for both regression equations. These two variables together account for approximately 26% of the variance in the high-middle analysis, and 24.5% of the variance in the low-middle analysis. "Home background", on the other hand, is insignificant in both equations. Similarly, "physical attractiveness" seems to be a totally irrelevant factor in placement decisions. The classroom behavior of the students and their work habits have some effect, albeit minimal. In the high-middle analysis, the behavior patterns of the students have a significant effect, but this effect is extremely low ($\beta = .05$). It is interesting to note that in the subsequent middle-low analysis, this same variable does not appear in the stepwise regression at all. Setting the tolerance level to equal .001, "behavior" proved to be too weak a predictor to enter the equation. As for "work habits", it borders on significance only in the middle-low analysis only if the .10 level of significance is taken, and its effect is negative. Finally, the R-square in the two analyses denotes that after all the variables have been entered in the equation, the variance explained in either analysis is approximately 25% only.

The second question involved the relation of SES to these perceptions. If the revisionist argument holds, then we would expect those perceptions to be related significantly (at least $r = .30$) to status. As table II indicates, zero-order correlations did not support these expectations, with the exception of two variables: teacher perceptions of the students' home background correlated significantly with SES ($r = .40$). This is certainly to be expected,

if teacher perceptions are to be reliable. Then, there is the low but significant correlation of general achievement with SES ($r = .305$; comparable to the correlation of reading achievement and SES, which is equal to $.29$). Again, this is not surprising, for it replicates what has usually been found in this context ($r = .23$ in Rehberg and Rosenthal, 1978; $r = .28$ in Haller and Davis, 1981b; $r = .31$ for the correlation between SES and intelligence, in Sewell and Shah, 1968).

Table III presents the results for the third question. Again, two separate analyses were done; one comparing the higher two groups across the three grades, and another comparing the lower groups across these grades. Using the test for comparing beta weights (Kleinbaum and Kupper, 1978), we got the following results: for the first analysis, as we go up from the first grade to the second there is a significant increase in the effect of student achievement on group placement. Comparing the second and the third grades, we find an insignificant decrease in that effect. Now taking the middle-low group analysis, we get a significant increase when comparing grades one and two; and a significant decrease when dealing with grades two and three. On the whole, applying the test for grades one and three, there is a significant increase and a significant decrease for the first and second analyses, respectively. As for the effect of SES on group placement, sometimes it is significant but low, and in a couple of instances it is insignificant. Yet, in the varying effects of SES across grades, no specific pattern is obvious.

Such findings for the third question do not support the revisionist conception of the increasing emergence of real differences in achievement as we go up successive grades. Though there are significant changes in the grades examined, the effects seem to be, at best, random.

The fourth question dealt with instructional time. For this purpose, a one way analysis of variance was done, using reading group level (1, 2, or 3)

as the groups in question, and "time" as the dependent variable. The mean time found to be spent with the first (high) group is 25.08 minutes per day. The mean time for the second group is 26.61 minutes per day. For the third group, it is 26.27 minutes per day. "Time" spent was not found to be significantly different between the three groups. Table IV presents a summary of the statistics involved.

Finally, the revisionist argument was generally not supported in the fifth question, as well. The crosstabulation (table V) of reading group placement in one year versus placement in the following year clearly shows that mobility in the sample is extremely high: 31.32% of the students are on the diagonal, indicating that there is approximately 70% mobility. Of the latter proportion, 32.5% of students have moved down, and 36.17% have moved up. As for mobility during the year, there is little evidence for that. As much as students get moved around from one year to another, students seem to change groups very little during the year. Few teachers reported changes in group membership within the year examined. Only about 38% of the teachers reported changes during the year. Of those teachers who reported change, more than one third had less than 10% of their students moving around the groups; and exactly one half had 10% to 25% mobility. If a "significant" amount of mobility is understood to be at least 25%, then only six of the teachers fall in this category. In other words, only 8.1% of the teachers reported any significant change in their group structure during the year.

Conclusions.

Our findings, in most cases, did not support the revisionist views concerning certain biases in the practice of grouping. There has been no indication that status, as such, causes group placement. Rather, views

conforming to the meritocratic arguments have been supported in several instances. The major instance where a finding could concur with a revisionist claim, is that of the relation of SES to teacher perceptions. It was found in this case that teacher perceptions of student achievement are significantly and positively correlated to the socioeconomic status of the students. Yet, the issue here is that though this relation exists, it is low. Such a relation is so moderate that it can be viewed differently by different people in the controversy: revisionists would point out its ubiquity, and meritocrats would declaim its low predictive effect.

Though this relation exists in our sample, it does not prove that teachers discriminate on the basis of the parental socioeconomic status of children. Allocations to reading groups is done mainly on the basis of the general and reading achievement of students. If SES does have any effect, as was the case in our sample, it seems that its effect is mediated by perceptions of the achievement of the students. This is in accordance with several major studies that tested this notion (Alexander, Cook and McDill, 19789; Haller and Davis, 1981; Heynes, 1974). As for any direct effect of the teachers' perceptions of the students' home background, these had no predictive power whatsoever in our sample.

Yet one cannot consider that the effects of achievement, and the little that work habits and behavior affect placement, provide a conclusive picture. Rather, they present only one fourth (25% Of the variance) of all the criteria that could possibly be predictors of placement.

The different effects of status and achievement on placement did vary from one level to another. But this variation was far from being systematic, and may well be only ascribable to random differences. Achievement significantly and positively predicted placement, even in the first grade. As we go up successively higher grades, sometimes the effect increased, sometimes

it decreased; and that varied by ability groups, as well. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that parental SES exerted a positive and significant influence in most of the cases. Though be it low, this effect of SES lends credibility to the claim that parental status does affect teacher perceptions to a certain degree. But, considering that perceptions of the students' background had negligible influence when tested, this finding strengthens the notion that any effect of SES on placement is mostly absorbed through teacher perceptions of the students' achievement and, much less so, through classroom habits and behavior.

Finally, little evidence was found to substantiate accusations regarding differential time treatment, and lack of mobility. The findings proved to be supportive of quite an opposite view. The average time allotted to each of the reading groups is practically the same; and children get moved up or down one or more ability groups.

Yet, during the year, very little shifting around the groups takes place, and mobility is rare. In a sense, this partly supports the revisionist claim that mobility is quasi non-existent. But this lack of mobility is only during a specific year, for mobility between years is high. So, if students change group positions with every new academic year, and very little during the year, that could carry several meanings: it could be that teachers do not depend on the previous teachers' judgements. Rather, they group anew, resulting in a major reshuffling of group positions. Also, it could be posited that in the ensuing year, different students are found in the class, thus changing a student's relative achievement and performance with respect to other students. So, pupils get placed in different groups. Or, it might simply be that students "improve" academically, or perform worse, and are thus allocated differently. Then, there is the deduction that teachers do not depend on "objective" measures of achievement, as much as on their professional

perceptions (as in Findley and Brian, 1971). Since perceptions differ, that is why placement differs from one year to another. At any rate, whatever the cause might be, that is a problem worth examining in a different context. Suffice it to say that contrary to longitudinal studies (Barker Lunn, 1970; Balow, 1964, for example) where mobility was found to be almost nil, this study found a substantial amount of transfer between groups. The revisionist claims that mobility is non-existent cannot be supported, except partly so: within the year, under the same teacher.

Where does all of this leave us regarding the practice of grouping? Several practices that could go on whilst grouping were examined in this paper. Little evidence of reprobatory practices was found. But, though grouping appears innocuous in this paper, many other empirical studies found evidence that supports an opposite view. Also, though there was no evidence of biased practices in grouping, there has been no effort in this paper to study any possible good or bad effects that grouping might have on the students' achievement and personality. Literature that has examined that aspect of the problem, has reported that grouping is sometimes hardly beneficial to the students' achievement and self-image (Borg, 1964; Findley and Brian, 1970). So, if any conclusions about grouping have to be made, we would have to examine the findings herein, with those of other studies.

Before reaching a conclusive answer, one would also want to examine other issues that have been unfortunately, so far, neglected. Therefore, suggestions for future research include the following: we need a clear formulation of what constitutes unbiased and beneficial treatment to the groups. After which, it will be easier to know why some studies report beneficial effects of grouping, and others do not. Knowing that, we could improve the system of tracking, or discard it altogether. We might also need studies that are conducted in the kindergarten, though reading instruction is rather unfocused in this stage. In

this present study, the earliest elementary grades were considered; it is feasible that even there, bias has already started, having commenced in kindergarten. It is also of utmost importance to examine the very first weeks of schooling, detecting how students behave, how teachers respond, form their perceptions, and then group. Thus, this could be best done in the form of observational case studies. Lastly, one should examine the conditions and restrictions imposed by principals upon teachers, regarding grouping. The role of principals, and the restrictions that teachers have to abide by, have, to the best of my knowledge, never been examined.

Table 1. Summary of multiple regression analysis examining the effects of teachers' perceptions on group placement (standardized regression weights).

<u>Perceptions</u>	<u>High-middle analysis</u> (N=1271)	<u>Middle-low analysis</u> (N=1257)
Reading achievement	.316*	.210*
General Achievement	.230*	.210*
Behavior	.050**	---
Work Habits	-.045	-.048
Family Background	.022	.017
Physical Attractiveness	-.019	.013
R ²	.264	.247

* $p < .01$

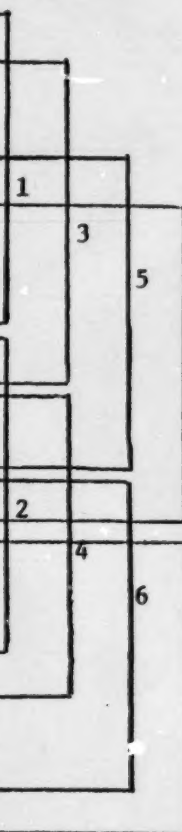
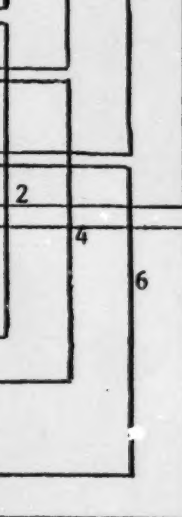
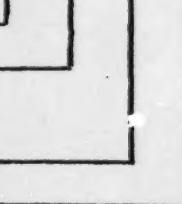
** $p < .05$

Table 2. Pearson correlations of SES with teacher perceptions.

	<u>General Achievement</u>	<u>Reading Ach.</u>	<u>Work Habits</u>	<u>Behavior</u>	<u>Home Bck.</u>
SES	.305	.290	.196	.114	.400
	<u>Physical Attractiveness</u>				
SES	.268				

Significance, $r > .30$

Table III. Summary of the effects of SES and achievement on group placement, by grade level. (Brackets denote comparisons of standardized beta weights).

Grade 1.	High-middle	Achievement	.2198*		1. $p < .05$ (increase) 2. ns. 3. $p < .05$ (decrease) 4. $p < .05$ (decrease) 5. $p < .05$ (increase) 6. $p < .05$ (decrease) 7. $p < .05$ (increase) 8. $p < .05$ (increase)
		SES	.1704*		
	Middle-low	Achievement	.367 *		
		SES	.0128		
Grade 2.	High-middle	Achievement	.3934*		1. $p < .05$ (increase) 2. ns. 3. $p < .05$ (decrease) 4. $p < .05$ (decrease) 5. $p < .05$ (increase) 6. $p < .05$ (decrease) 7. $p < .05$ (increase) 8. $p < .05$ (increase)
		SES	.1524*		
	Middle-low	Achievement	.4225*		
		SES	.0251		
Grade 3.	High-middle	Achievement	.392 *		1. $p < .05$ (increase) 2. ns. 3. $p < .05$ (decrease) 4. $p < .05$ (decrease) 5. $p < .05$ (increase) 6. $p < .05$ (decrease) 7. $p < .05$ (increase) 8. $p < .05$ (increase)
		SES	.145 *		
	Middle-low	Achievement	.347 *		
		SES	.159 *		

* Significant, $p < .05$

Table IV. Summary of ANOVA statistics.

<u>Source</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
Between groups	72.71	2	36.35	.6349
<u>Within groups</u>	<u>9276.22</u>	<u>162</u>	<u>57.26</u>	
<u>Total</u>	<u>9348.93</u>	<u>164</u>		

Table V. Cross-tabulation of the number of students in the top 3 groups in one year, with the number of students in the top 3 groups in the following year.

<u>Reading group membership II</u>				
		1	2	3
<u>Reading group membership I.</u>	1	110	97	64
	2	97	91	60
	3	76	73	32

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